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Senator Lugar Seeks to Define Policy Abroad

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 — The new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee called on Americans today to forge a new consensus on United States vital interests around the world and whether they should be defended with military force.

In his first policy speech since taking over the committee this month, Senator Richard G. Lugar said that as a result of the Vietnam War, "the United States has been and continues to be uncertain about the use of force in the conduct of American foreign policy."

Before that involvement, he said, "some widely shared assumptions were held about the national interest and potential threats to it."

A Cost of Vietnam War

"Some consensus was apparent on appropriate remedies to our problems," he said. "One of the costs of Vietnam was the breakup of this consensus."

Mr. Lugar, an Indiana Republican, has announced that the committee will hold hearings on American foreign policy starting Jan. 31 with appearances by Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger. The hearings are to last more than a month as dozens of former and current officials and public figures testify.

1960's View Is Echoed

Senator Lugar indicated today that the hearings would seek to determine in detail American commitments abroad and when the use of force was appropriate to defend them.

His comments recalled those of a former chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, J. William Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, who argued in the late 1960's that the United States

had made too many direct and indirect commitments to protect foreign governments without taking into account the price of meeting those commitments.

Mr. Lugar, in a speech to the National Press Club, said that too often Americans want a policy of "containment without cost," of maintaining commitments without wanting to enforce them.

"In poll after poll, Americans express their concern about hostile governments which imperil our interests in Latin America and elsewhere," he said. "But in these same polls, Americans display an equal and overwhelming opposition to any course of action which might actually frustrate governments which are harmful to us."

"It is important to restore a greater degree of consensus about our interests and commitments around the world and about our willingness to defend them," Senator Lugar said. "Do we really have vital interests all around the globe? Do we have the economic and military capabilities and the political will to support these interests with a safe margin of risk? Do we have a long-term, substantial and correct view of the Soviet Union? Do we have an appropriate understanding of the economic, political and spiritual forces that move nations?"

He did not answer his questions but said at the end of his speech that after the committee hearings, "we will have a better idea of the military forces needed to meet our obligations and the economic resources required to sustain those commitments."

Points of Accord Predicted

"We will probably agree on containment of Soviet adventurism, the value of nuclear reduction negotiations, the importance of worldwide economic growth, of fewer trade barriers, greater building of democratic constitutions and human rights guarantees," he said. "The foreign policy consensus that we seek is not simply one of a few dedicated senators, but a coming together of the American people at the grass roots."

"Questions about commitments and the proper use of force must be resolved in the coming years and strengthen the heart of American foreign policy," he said.

In discussing the Soviet Union, Mr. Lugar seemed skeptical about the value of détente and of arms control agreements in reducing tension.

"A substantial majority of Americans in both political parties now maintain a high degree of realism about the Soviet Union," he said. Although many Americans continue to hope for agreements to reduce nuclear arms, he said, it is important to recognize that "they cannot alone contribute substantially to the balance we require for our security."

In the past, chairmen of the Foreign Relations Committee have favored arms control agreements to reduce East-West tension. But Mr. Lugar's comments were much more in keeping with those of conservatives in the Administration who want to give priority to research on a space-based missile defense known officially as the Strategic Defense Initiative and informally as the "Star Wars" program.

"I firmly believe that without the introduction of the new Strategic Defense Initiative, we would have little reason to hope for any substantial or positive development in arms control negotiations," he said.

In response to questions, Mr. Lugar repeated his concern, first voiced in late November, about South Africa's policy of racial separation.

"I think the South African Government is making an awesome mistake in failing to move and move very rapidly" to ease tension in that country.

"Our goal must be to persuade the South African Government to share power with black citizens in South Africa and move rapidly for the good of that country and for the good of the Western strategic position," he said.

Asked whether he supported covert

aid to the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua, Mr. Lugar said he did not think such a program workable because it was no longer possible to keep the aid secret. He said he opposed open assistance because that would be tantamount to declaring war on Nicaragua, which Americans did not favor.

He said he hoped the Administration and Congress could produce an original formula to substitute for the covert aid.